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VISITS
TO
THE AVIARY.

Henriette Thompson

BRITISH
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MUSEUM

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Tales of the Aviary

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VISITS

TO

THE AVIARY.

FOR THE

INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

CHARLES one day asked his father, when the discourse was upon natural history, if he might see those birds himself, of which he had heard and read so much. "Oh," said he, "how delightful it would be to visit those countries where such beautiful creatures resort; I should then see, with my own eyes, that there are such birds."—"Charles," replied his father, "it would give me much pleasure to satisfy your curiosity in this particular, as it would not only be instructive to yourself, but likewise gratifying my own sight with a number of the feathered race, which

I now only know, and that imperfectly, from books."—"Let us make a voyage, then," said Charles, with his eyes earnestly fixed upon his father; "let us go to Asia, and to Africa, where those birds are found."—"Ah, Charles," replied his father, "you are not aware of the difficulties which would attend such a voyage; perhaps we should be lost in the sea, which it would be necessary to cross, before we reached those distant parts."—"Lost!" exclaimed Charles, suddenly.—"Yes," replied his father, "have you never read of people being cast away, or ship-wrecked?"—"Yes, certainly," answered Charles, "but I know that many have made voyages to distant parts, without being cast away, and have returned in safety; and it is not long since my uncle returned from the Indies, where he saw many curious birds and beasts. O how I delighted to hear him de-

scribe

scribe them; I will ask him to take me with him, when he goes again."—"But stop a little, Charles," said his father, "you must not suppose that Asia and Africa are the only quarters of the Earth where these delightful creatures, as you call them, are to be seen. Europe and America present animals of various kinds, many of which are, perhaps, equally wonderful in their structure and appearance. It is true, that in Asia are found the ponderous elephant, and the beautiful bird of paradise, but innumerable are the animals which abound in other countries, that equally command our admiration. We ought, perhaps, to be well acquainted with the birds of our own country, before we seek after those that inhabit distant regions."—"But," said Charles, "the birds of our own country are neither so large nor so handsome as many foreign ones."—"That may be," replied his

father, "and yet there is much to know and admire in the race of birds, that belong to our own and other countries of Europe; but let us not imagine that all foreign birds are large and beautiful; the humming bird, about the size of a large nut, only inhabits the east, and the warm countries of the equator."—"Ah," said Charles, "those are the birds I want to see; those that we find in our fields and hedges have little or no beauty to recommend them."—"That is," replied his father, "because you have not sufficiently attended to them; for they have engaged the attention of every naturalist, which proves their worth; and a knowledge of the variety of their plumage, the time of their singing, their migration and other interesting qualities, are well worth the observance of every lover of this department of animated nature. But, I think I can gratify your curiosity in part without your

your undergoing the perils of the sea, to visit the plains of Asia or the deserts of Africa."—"Is it impossible?" asked Charles vehemently. "Wait but till to-morrow and you will see. A friend of mine, whom you know very well, has a cabinet of natural history, in which is an extensive collection of birds."—"What alive?"—"Alive or not, they are all clothed with their natural feathers, and shine in the same gay plumage with which nature adorned them."—"O! that to-morrow was come."—"Suppress your joy, Charles; after all they may not appear so curious as your imagination has painted them: we sometimes put too much value upon what we have never seen, and which, when the objects become familiar to us, and we are better acquainted with them, we are apt to slight. Hence our disappointments often arise from

an over anxious expectation, and a wrong notion of something excellent in what we have never seen."

FIRST VISIT.

THE morning being come, Charles, without much difficulty, could not get his breakfast; all his thoughts and conversation were occupied with the intended sight of the birds. He was continually asking his father when he was to set out, how great was the distance, and how long it would be before they arrived at his friends. "Have patience, Charles," said his father, "there is time enough; it is now early in the morning, and though I have apprised them of the visit, yet were we to set off earlier, we might arrive at an unseasonable hour, and perhaps incommode the family. I have also thought of your brother going with you, as my business will not permit me to stay, and it is most

most likely that you will not return for several days."—"I should be very glad," said Charles, "for Henry to accompany me; I will shew him many nice birds."—"I am pleased to find," answered his father, "that you are so willing to let Henry partake with you in your amusements." The coach at length drove up to the door, when Charles and his brother entered it, and in less than two hours arrived at M— —. They were presently introduced to the family, and, after partaking of a little refreshment, accompanied their friend to his cabinet of natural history. It led through a very beautiful shrubbery, the walks of which were enclosed with divers trees, plain and variegated; and which formed so enchanting a scene, that Charles could not but recollect what he had heard of lofty trees and impenetrable shades. They soon came to a large handsome building

ing, which contained a variety of natural objects, that M— had, with much care and taste, assiduously collected from time to time. But no part of this cabinet was more amply supplied than that appropriated to birds.

On entering the second apartment, M—— drew up a green curtain, and instantly presented to their view a whole tribe of birds of the first order for size and strength. *What a sight*, exclaimed Charles, turning to M—— *here is the great eagle.* It is the largest of the eagles; but it is called the golden eagle, as you may read on the label. *Ah, here is its name.* You will find them all labelled in the same manner. *What beautiful feathers, and what a length are its wings!* Yes, the whole body is a dark brown, and its back, in particular, delightfully shaded with a deep tinge of the same colour. This before you measures

sures three feet, and the wings, when stretched out, are not less than seven feet from tip to tip. It is a very destructive bird, and will carry away fauns, kids, and lambs, with great ease. But you will be astonished when I inform you, that in Scotland an eagle once carried off two young children, and conveyed them into its nest! *Little children! and devoured them?* No, it is said they were both rescued by the peasants before they were materially hurt. *What a strong bird it must be; what talons; how long and crooked! And here is another not much unlike it, called the ring-tailed eagle on the label.* It is so named on account of the ring which you see covers about two-thirds of its tail. You see it varies in its plumage from the other. *Its neck is redder.* It is so, and rather more spotted. *But what is this that covers the legs almost to the toes?* This bushy part is composed

posed of feathers: feel them, and you will find it so. *Is it as savage as the other?* They differ but little in that respect; this is more common than the golden eagle, and prefers more northern climes. In Europe, it is found in Germany, Switzerland, and Great Britain; and in America, as far north, as Hudson's Bay. But let us leave this, and go to another. Read the name. *It is the sea eagle; it does not look so cruel as the others: and what fine feathers adorn it!* It is more remarkable for the beauty of its clothing, than either of the former; observe the feathers on its shoulders are edged with a whitish colour. It usually haunts about the sea-shore, and is to be met with in various parts of the world. Captain Cook saw it at Botany Bay island. A remarkable story is told of this bird by one who was a witness of the fact. It had ascended the air with a cat in its talons, when

the

the violent twistings of the cat brought it to the ground, by which it was forced to set its prey at liberty. *The eagle mastered by a cat!* It is very remarkable; but the cat possesses considerable strength, and can twine itself very dexterously. Now let us pass to the next. *What, another eagle?* You may read this is the white-tailed eagle. *It is not so large as the golden eagle; but what a bill!* True, it is inferior in size, but not much in strength and vigour; it is even more furious than the common eagle, and is said to drive its young from the nest when it has fed them but a very short time. *Is it so cruel?* It is hardly creditable, for it is a general principle which nature has implanted in the whole animated creation, that the mother should nourish and bring up her young until they are capable of providing for themselves. *But this is not so handsome as the last.*

last. It has not quite such coloured plumes, but it seems to unite in it most of the colours that are found in the other eagles, except the sea eagle. You see its breast is irregularly marked with white spots. You may also observe the same strong hooked bill as in all the others; a most formidable weapon, and seemingly designed for slaughter. *Let me put my finger in its mouth.* Take care it does not bite! *No, no, it is not alive, but I do not like its cold mouth: and what eyes it has!* They are very strong and piercing; and it is said the eagle can look on the sun without being dazzled by its rays. It often mounts to a great height in the air, whence it has been termed the bird of heaven. The eagle seldom troubles the habitations of men; it chiefly resides in desart places, and chooses rather to live, in a precarious manner, upon the wild game of the forest, than endanger its liber-

ty; though it will sometimes venture to carry off a goose or a lamb, in places not much frequented. We have great reason to be thankful for, as well as to admire, that law of nature, by which the number of animals is proportioned by their usefulness, or their powers to do us harm. We find that the eagle has seldom more than two young ones at a time; for were they to lay and hatch as many eggs as many other birds less hurtful, we should be in continual danger of being attacked by them: they would carry off the domestic animals that supply us with food, and, perhaps, sometimes even dare to assault the smiling infant! Now let us proceed: draw up the other curtain; what do you see? (reads the label) *This is the kite.* Yes, a bird of a less formidable appearance than those which we have just left, but perhaps no less savage. *But it is not very beautiful.* You see it is streaked

streaked with brown down its back, and the margin of each feather is rather pale. Do you not observe its yellow legs and black claws. *Yes, certainly: the talons appear very strong.* It has sufficient strength, but yet is not a very courageous bird, and is rather an insidious thief than a bold robber, and will seldom attack any except those that cannot defend themselves. It is almost continually on the watch for prey, and when it meets with a poor chicken that is lame, or by some means is left behind the rest, it darts upon the little fowl and carries it off before the mother is alarmed, or any assistance can be given. *O! I do not like such birds; they are cowardly savage. What long wings it has!* The length of its wings enables it to be a long time on the wing in search of food. *What a comical tail; it is like a fork.* That is a very distinguishing mark, by which we can tell it from

the buzzard. *Is the kite a common bird?* Yes, it is found in various parts of Europe, and they retire in great numbers to Africa to winter, where they breed, and, contrary to the nature of rapacious birds in general, return in spring and breed a second time. *But what is that beautiful bird which stands next to it?* You may see it is called the Grashawk. *What a nice bird!* I do not wonder at your admiring it; its mottled breast, barred with wavy lines of black, and the white lines over each eye, make it superior, in point of beauty, to others of the same tribe. *But it has a cruel look.* It is indeed a rapacious creature, and will devour mice and small birds. *What, eat other birds?* Yes, certainly, and that in a very delicate manner, it first plucks the feathers off its prey, and then rolls them up into small pellets, which it swallows with ease!— *Is not this another hawk? I have seen one in*

Papa's

Papa's garden; it used to destroy little birds, and I once saw a young sparrow in its claw. I need not then describe it to you. *It is very pretty; what a number of spotted feathers.* It is, indeed, far from being devoid of beauty; but do not you observe its fierce look? *Yes, and that hooked bill, as strong as a pair of pincers, I never wish to have my finger in its mouth again.* You perhaps know that it makes dreadful havock among the tame pigeons. It is a hardy bird, and will bear very heavy blows without being much hurt. It is to be met with in various parts, from Russia to the Cape of Good Hope. But let us leave it to admire the next. *Oh! this is a charming bird; it is more beautiful than any we have seen yet.* (looks at the label and reads—"the gentile falcon") I see it takes your attention; but it is no less courageous than beautiful. Many birds that disregard the hawk, will fly

away screaming at the sight of the falcon. It was a bird highly valued in former times, but is now but little noticed, as to any service that it can render us. In those times the gun was but little in use, and the hawk and falcon, were trained up to procure those delicacies which are now more easily obtained. But if this were the boasted service of the falcon, we have not much to regret its disuse; indeed, it would be well if the destruction of the feathered race, so much practised at present, were more discouraged. Having satisfied your curiosity, let us examine the remainder of the falcon kind, with which we will finish this visit. *Here is a bird that we have never seen.* Very likely, it is not met with in England, but is found in Ireland and other parts of Europe. Read the name. *It is the lanner.* So called from the method of devouring its prey, which it tears into small pieces

pieces with its bill. You will not find much in it to attract your notice; spotted like the rest, but devoid of any lively colours. *But here is another; what a resemblance between them all; they must be of the same family.* There is a great likeness, but their size distinguishes them. *The hobby: what a comical name!* You see that is its name. It is nearly the size of the sparrow hawk; but observe its plumage is more varied; a black mark extends from behind each eye, in the form of a crescent, downwards on its neck. It was formerly used in the chace, but chiefly confined to small birds, as larks, the manner of catching which is singular: As soon as the hawk was let go, the lark, struck with fear at the sight of its destroyer, remained fixed to the ground, and so became an easy prey to the fowler. *Here is one more; is this also of the hawk kind?* Only regard its bill.

Ah,

Ah, I see it is bent like the rest, but this is smaller than any of the others. It is so, but it displays a degree of courage and ferocity that render him formidable to birds of a much larger bulk. We will now take leave of this tribe of birds. The importance of animals is in proportion to their connection with man: the more useful they are to him, the more he regards them. The hawk formerly contributed to his pleasure, and brought him delicacies for his table; it is now little noticed; the sport of hawking is laid aside, and he has invented other means to supply himself with game. Thus the hawk is abandoned to its original state, and left to haunt the wilds and deserts with the other rapacious tribes. We will now close this case, and resume our examination to-morrow.

SECOND

SECOND VISIT.

DRAW up the curtain of that case on the left. What strikes your view? *A whole family of owls. What figures!* They may, at first glance, appear all alike; but, examine them more narrowly, and you will soon discover a striking difference between each species. There are no less than twelve kinds of the owl, and all rapacious birds. You may remember that, at a former visit, the birds that came under our view were called birds of prey; so are these now before us, with this difference, the eagle and the falcon take their flight in broad day, and boldly attack their prey; while the owl, a more insidious enemy, prowls about in the dusk of the evening, when all nature reposes, and makes its attacks when the other birds are returning

turning to rest; or else early in the morning, at twilight, when the animated creation begins to awake. Let us now examine them separately, and attend to the variety which each species exhibits. *What great ears!*—It is called the great-ear'd owl, though what are termed ears, are only tufts of feathers, that grow upright upon its head. *What a pity it should look so ugly, it has such nice feathers.* Those eyes which are so large and staring, are admirably adapted to the nature of this bird: as it seeks its food in the dark, it requires a keener sight than other birds. Indeed, we shall find that these nocturnal birds are furnished with every quality necessary to their habits and dispositions. Look at the next. *Longer ears still. They are like horns.* It is sometimes called the horn owl, but it is termed, on the label, the long-eared owl. *Ah, I was just reading it. Let us feel*

its

its ears. They are stiff. Do you not admire the feathers? *They are very pretty, and so is every part of it. But here is another with shorter ears.* It is the short eared owl. *It is handsomely decked with mottled feathers. But I do not like its large head and staring eyes.* Consider they are adapted to the manner of life which the bird leads, and of course we should not object to its make, let us rather admire that wisdom which has so happily endued it with every conveniency. Its eye, you may observe, when contracted, shines like gold. It is a very scarce bird, and Mr. Pennant, the famous naturalist, was the first that described this beautiful species. It frequents solitary places, and chiefly preys upon field mice; which it hunts in the night season, when these little animals leave their holes, and sally out in quest of food; but, alas! they are destined to be food for others. *Ah! here*

is a white one: it is called the white owl on the label. That is the name that I have chosen to call it by. It mostly lives in barns and old ruined buildings. It is of much service. *What use can it be of?* It destroys the mice that abound so in our barns, and which, if their numbers were not lessened, would do much damage in destroying the corn: so far this, the owl, is serviceable to man. But I observe you regard its plumage. *Oh, it is a handsome one.* But remember the liveliness of the colour varies with its age, and I have seen one not at all striking to the eye for its beauty; but this is a young one. Observe its head and back, how handsomely they are powdered with fine grey and brown spots, intermixed with white. *But what is that round its eye?* I thought you would have overlooked it; it is a fine radiated circle. Feel it; how delicately soft; and so white.

I am

I am quite charmed with it. It makes up for its great head. If you were to hear its frightful cries, which it utters in the dead of the night, it would strike you with terror. Even while it sleeps, it makes a loud blowing noise, which may be heard at some distance from its perch. *Ah, but what a little one is this next.* You see it is the last of the owls, but by much the smallest. *Let me read its name.* It is the little owl. It is not much bigger than a blackbird, but still resembles the others, except the white one, in its make and colour of the plumage. *What sharp eyes!* It has a keener sight than any of the owl tribe, and will give chace to swallows, and other small birds. It feeds also upon mice, which it tears into small pieces with its claws, and swallows by morsels. This is by no means a common bird in England. It differs in its habits from the other kinds. And you may

now recollect that at the opening of this case, you were struck with the seeming likeness that they all appeared to exhibit, yet we have discovered much variety in the different species. They all agree in being nocturnal robbers; and if one should happen to stray from its hiding place in the day time, it would be soon followed by a whole race of small birds, that would hunt it about and persecute it violently: in such a situation the owl perches upon some tree, and there sits, amidst the noise and chattering of the little birds, that are spread about the branches below. There it sits quite composed; sometimes looking down upon them in a scornful manner and making affronting gestures. Thus the owl seems despised by the rest of the feathered race; and driven from the light of day, it takes its excursions in the night season, when it commits great devastation. But

the

the service of the barn owl more than compensates for the mischief the others do abroad, by destroying the mice nearer home; for one of these owls will more effectually rid a barn of these disagreeable vermin than half a dozen cats: the destruction which the owl makes among the smaller tribes of the feathered race, is quite justifiable, upon that principle by which nature has ordained that one part of the creation should be devoted to the supplying of the other with food. But let us now leave this nightly race, and see what will discover itself upon drawing up this little curtain. *I will soon do that: What strange birds are these; are they hawks?* Read the name. *It is the Shrike.* A rapacious bird, as you may discover by its bill. *Ah! I did not like its look at first.* This is the great ash coloured shrike. *But here are two more; they seem to be nearly alike.* There are

but three species of them, and one of each kind is in this collection. This has a spotted head; and mark that black stripe which passes through each eye. *What frightful talons!* They are strong like other birds of prey; but I suppose you are surprised at their length. You will observe the same in the next, which is called the red-backed shrike, on account of the tinge on that part of the body. *It has a black mark over each eye, like the other.* But it is plainer than that on the last, which is occasioned by being contrasted with its white throat. The shrike feeds on grasshoppers, beetles, and other insects. It will imitate the notes of other birds that it wishes to decoy, and, by enticing them, to seize them. *What a deceitful bird. I do not like the shrike.*---We are now come to the last in this case. *I am going to read its name. It is the woodchat. What a strange name!* It resembles

resembles the last, though its name is very different. *Oh, they are much alike.* True, you do not discover much variety in their plumage: they, are, in some respects, of similar habits, also, being both migratory at the close of the year, and returning in spring at the same time. They are rapacious birds, but only so in degree, and seem to be the last of those birds that live by rapine and plunder. They have been variously classed, being sometimes placed with the falcons, and even with the little innocent sparrow. They seem to form a link between the rapacious and other birds. This is the plan of nature, she forms an imperceptible link between very different species of animals, and seems to knit them together, at the close of one kind by a species which is rendered doubtful to which side it belongs. Thus animals of opposite natures and dispositions, are brought to bear a distant likeness. In the higher

classes of beings we see it, between man and the ourang-outang; in the lower gradations of existence, between the most imperfect animal and the sensitive plant. We are now about to take leave of the rapacious birds, and, at our next visit, shall enter upon another case. These birds have many characteristical marks, which distinguish them from the other tribes of the inhabitants of the air. They in general lead a solitary life, seldom seen together, but always hovering about, upon the watch for prey; and, being often instigated by hunger, it is no wonder that they are sometimes savagely cruel. Their hooked bill, so strongly formed, and their short legs, and sharp crooked talons, seem to point them out as destroyers. They no sooner appear in sight, than the singing of the warblers is hushed, and all seek to hide themselves from the common enemy. The

vocal

vocal music which seemed to animate the groves, is immediately succeeded by a dull silence, that changes the enlivened scene into a sullen gloom. We may wonder at the whole race of small birds not being utterly extirpated; but the œconomy of nature is here visible: each species of rapacious birds has a particular kind which constitutes its food; for, were all the birds of prey to devour any one that came in their way, the whole feathered songsters would soon be extirpated! It is now time to adjourn.

THIRD

THIRD VISIT.

NOW draw up the curtain; you know which is the next. *What a number of birds are here. What different sizes: they are none of them alike. What disorder!* No, they are all regularly arranged. They compose that class of birds which naturalists term the *pie* kind. They are, as you observe, of different make, and vary much in their plumage. They all, more or less, frequent the habitations of men, which they flutter round, and reside near, with much boldness. Many of them fly together in flocks, and seem to live in great harmony. They are many of them, from the raven to the woodpecker, a noisy chattering race. They are also some of them mischievous, but none so as to be classed

classed with the rapacious tribes. But let us begin to examine them. *I know the first; it is a raven. What a fine black covers its body. How it shines!* The crow and the rook are also black, but neither of them so large as the raven. This is a common bird, and not now of much note; but, in former times, when the credulity of the word suffered itself to be imposed upon by evil designing men, the raven was held in great estimation, and by many people kept sacred. Its croaking harsh note was regarded, by superstitious people, as foreboding calamities. Every variation or change of its voice was studied with great attention, and made use of, by artful men, to mislead the ignorant. This bird abounds in almost every part of the globe, bearing alike the heats of the tropics, and the piercing cold of the northern regions. But I see your attention is taken by the crow. *Ah! these are*

crows,

crows, and there I see a rook: but this is the carrion crow. It is so called from its feeding upon putrid flesh, in which they do us an essential service, as the noxious quality which rotten meat emits, infects the air, and renders it unfit to breathe. The crow is as widely spread as the raven, and agrees with it in many of its habits; but it is less docile, and not so much favoured by man. *But here is one that is not a crow.* It is a variety of that bird, but differing much from it in the colour of its plumage, which, on its back and breast, you may observe, is a pale ash colour. You have not read the label. *I was just going. It is called the hooded crow.* It is not so common as our crow, and frequents more northern countries, where it builds its nest upon the lofty pine, which shoots up, in those cold regions, to a very great height. *But now we are come to the rook; it is much like the crow;*

crow; I do not see any difference between them. You see that it has a more glossy back, and its bill differs from it, in being covered with a rough skin, that seems to be peculiar to this bird. *What a croaking noise the rook makes. We live near a rookery, and they are often disturbing.* They do so, and often fight very hard for a nest, which some one stronger has been taking possession of in their absence. These birds are very destructive in the fields, committing great devastations; but they perhaps, make ample amends, by destroying caterpillars, and the noxious insect. The rook demands the protection of man, because he solicits it. But you are proceeding, I see. *Ah! what beautiful bird is this? and a whole row of white-feathered beauties! How charmingly they look, what handsome feathers;* Stop a little, let us examine them separately, here is the daw, you see. *What the jack daw?*

daw? I did not think it was so pretty a bird. See, its whole body is a faint purple dashed with grey; and do you regard its wings? *O yes! what a nice blue adorns them; I am quite in love with this bird.* It is very docile, and feeds upon fruits; though it will sometimes kill a little bird. It is common in England, and I am rather surprised you were not gratified with the sight of one before. They are likewise found in France and Germany, but leave those countries at certain seasons. They seldom build their nests on trees, but mostly in old ruined buildings, where flocks of them will resort together. *But here is a bird that we know; it is the magpie, and just like that we keep in our yard.* It is a very elegant bird, but there is not so much variety in its plumage as in the last. It is also a less amiable bird, being an unwelcome intruder every where. It will perch upon

a cow's

a cow's or a sheep's back, with great boldness, seeking and pecking out the insects that are in the wool, and so tormenting the poor animal. It likewise robs other birds of their eggs, particularly the blackbird and the thrush; but the nest of the magpie is a very curious thing. I have one in a little basket upon that shelf. Reach it down: I dare say you have never seen one. *This a nest! why there is no entrance into it.* Look more narrowly: see this little hole. *How can it get in there?* It is quite large enough for it to squeeze itself in, and that is all it wants. But observe the materials of which it is made. These are thorns sticking out as a defence. The nest is lined with fibrous roots, wool, long grass, and plaistered all over with clay. This, you see, forms a safe retreat from the vengeance of other birds, that have sufficient reason to retaliate on the magpie.

But how admirable is the instinct of some birds! *Ah! here is another crow.* No, it is a variety of the common crow. Observe, its legs are red, and its plumage of a purpleish black. *So it is—it looks different from the other.* It is a more active bird, and is described as of an elegant figure, lively, restless, and turbulent; but may be tamed to a certain degree. *But here is a nice bird, higher up than the rest. I cannot read the name.* It is the nut-cracker. *And a beautiful bird it is.* Its shape is very elegant; observe its breast and back, how finely spotted; and, being contrasted with its dark wings, make a very gay appearance. *What a pretty tail!* The top, you see, is quite white, and the rest black. *It must be some foreign bird.* It does not often visit us, but seems to delight in colder climates, where it usually haunts the mountainous parts, and feeds upon nuts and the kernel of the pine-

apple.

apple. *Oh, here is another still more handsome! What are those feathers on its head?* They form its crest. *Oh, it is the jay; I have heard of the jay.* You did not suppose it to be so gay a bird; observe its fine blue wings, and its white forehead streaked with black. *I am quite delighted with it; but here is another equally handsome.* What! I find you are already gone to the handsome chatterer. *I could not help admiring so beautiful a bird.* I do not blame you; amidst so many attractive beauties, I am rather surprised at your patience in attending to my minute descriptions. The bird before us is noted for its noble crest; you know what I mean? *Yes, that tuft of feathers on its head.* Now observe its purple breast, and its wings, which are so delicately edged with white. We are not often favoured with the company of this elegant bird; it only visits us

at uncertain seasons. Their summer residence is within the arctic circle, whence they spread themselves into other countries during winter, and return to their former haunts at the approach of spring. There is but one kind of the chatterer in Europe; the other species, which are many, are all natives of America. *But here is another fine bird.* Yes, no less beautiful than the former is the roller. Examine it attentively, as it stands here with outstretched wings; see how handsomely they are variegated with blue, black, and white. The naked ring which surrounds each eye, still adds to its beauty. *Oh, it is a nice bird.* This is not a very young one; it is therefore more brilliant in its colours, which are not so handsome in very young ones. *Here is the starling too! What a common bird to be placed here!* But you have probably not sufficiently

ently considered its plumage; do not be content with a single glance. Look here at this glossy neck, that inclines to a purple; and, is it not spotted all over, more or less? *It is more handsome than I at first thought it was.* But this is a male bird, which is very different from the female, in respect to the liveliness of its feathers. In the male they are darker, and the spots more vivid. I hardly need inform you of the habits and manner of living of the starling. They often assemble in large flocks, as if holding a consultation, and make a loud chattering noise, both when they assemble and disperse. So attached are they to society, that they not only keep company with those of their own species, but also with birds of different tribes; and we not unfrequently see them spread over a meadow, with redwings, fieldfares, crows, and even pigeons. But innu-

merable are the tribes that range with the starlings, and which, like them, feed upon fruits and berries. Words could not describe the beautiful tints that adorn many foreign birds which are classed with them. The brilliant green of the emerald, the flaming red of the ruby, the purple of the amethyst, or the bright blue of the sapphire, could not, by the most artful combination, shew any thing so truly lovely, or delightful to the sight, as the feathers of the chilcoqui.

Oh, those foreign birds, (exclaimed Charles.) Let us for the present be content with reading the *descriptions* of such birds; an opportunity may, perhaps, some time offer, of gratifying you with a sight of them. Let us now proceed, and see what is hidden behind this little curtain. *What a charming sight! These are nice birds: let me read their names.* The first on this shelf is the rose-

coloured

coloured ouzel. *O, I have never seen any thing like them before: how beautifully they are plumed.* The size of this, you may see, is nearly the size of the starling; but it is a far more striking bird; only observe its body, glossed with shades of blue, purple, and green, and its wings coloured like the rose, interspersed with a few dark irregular spots. It is the most beautiful of the ouzel kind; it delights in warm countries; and is chiefly found between the tropics. Its principal food is locusts; and it chiefly resides in those countries where these destructive insects swarm in most abundance. It is accounted highly serviceable, and almost revered by the inhabitants. *But here is another called the ring ouzel.* Is it so handsome as the other? *O! no, the last is a very pretty bird.* You see this wants most of the

gay

gay colours that adorn the other. *Ah! but I see a beautiful white spot on its breast.* Truly that is worthy of notice, and is a striking contrast to the other parts, which have little in appearance to recommend them. You do not observe the other white spot, which surrounds its neck in the form of a crescent. But here comes a very different bird. *It is almost black.* I wonder you do not know it; it is very common; and you are only misled by the label. *It is the blackbird, or very much like it.* It is so, but it is often called the black ouzel, a name which is given it here. *What a fine glossy black. I did not think the blackbird so handsome.* Though it has not much variety in its plumage, yet you see it is of an elegant form; and the yellow ring which surrounds each eye, forms a pleasing contrast to its sable hue. This before us is a male: the female

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is of a brownish colour, and a much humbler bird. It would be needless to describe it minutely to you, but have you ever seen its nest? *No.* Then you will be surprised, when I tell you that it is so hard that a person might stand upon it without breaking it. *A nest so strong! I thought birds always made their nests of soft materials.* It is not many weeks since I found an old nest built by one of these birds, and it was so hard that I am convinced it would bear kicking about some time, before it would fall to pieces. It was made of mud and clay, with bits of stick plaistered about it, but the inside was lined again with moss and hay. Your attention seems to be arrested by another bird. *It is the fieldfare, I was admiring its spotted throat. What a nice little bird!* We may see these birds in large flocks together, spread over the meadows, in the winter season. It is, however,

however, only a visitant of this island. In the summer it inhabits the northern countries of Denmark, Norway, and Ruſſia, and is even found as far north as Kamschatka. Let us now examine the throstle, a bird which I perceive you already recognize. *Yes; I have seen one kept in a large cage, and though its note was charming, I could not help pitying its fate.* Your feelings are just; to force birds to lead an imprisoned life, cannot be consistent with humanity. It is to deprive them of that liberty which nature designs them to enjoy, or why did she give them wings? If any creatures were ever formed to range at pleasure, surely it must be the feathered race; their form, and their wings, so adapted to undertaking long journies, all speak in favour of liberty. The throstle has indeed a charming note; it cheers us with its song early in the spring, and

forms

forms a pleasing contrast to the discordant voice of the jay, the daw, and the rook. Loud and sonorous, the groves resound with the shrillness of its note, and re-echo a pleasing variety of musical sounds. You have not, it is true, much to admire in its plumage; but its want of beauty is amply recompensed by the sweetness of its song. You may observe this case is divided into two partitions. We are already come to the last bird contained in the first: we will, therefore, close this visit, and commence the next at the first convenient opportunity.

FOURTH

FOURTH VISIT.

NOW my young naturalists, we are again about to amuse ourselves. Charles, step forward, and present us with a sight of the birds contained in the second part of this long case. Here you see the red wing, for the first; a bird very common, but which, I suppose, you do not remember to have ever seen before. *O! no; but it is a nice bird; let me come nearer and touch it.* Raise up its wings; the feathers under them are delicately tinged with red. *It has a white streak over each eye; how pretty it looks!* But we must not forget that it is a singing bird; it is said to have nearly as pleasing a note as the throstle. It is very delicate eating, and the ancient Romans held them in high estimation.

mation. Thousands of them wre kept together in large aviaries; and fed upon a kind of paste made of bruised figs and flour. This was to improve the flavour and delicacy of their flesh, to please the pampered appetites of Epicures. Remember that these aviaries were nothing better than prisons, where the poor birds were kept out of sight from every object that might tend to remind them of their natural state of liberty! Thus, they were never permitted to see woods, fields, or any thing that was likely to disturb their repose. *I was going to read the name of that strange bird a little before us.* Pray read it. *It is the cuckoo! I have often heard the noise of this bird, but never before saw one.* Now then you have a sight of one; satisfy your curiosity: observe its white belly and breast, elegantly crossed with bars of black. *What a nice spotted tail!* But its plumage would

have never obtained it so much fame; it is its singular habits and disposition that render it so universally known. Unlike other birds, it builds no nest, but deposits its solitary egg in the mansion of another bird, and leaves it to be hatched by the owner. The nest of the tit-lark, the yellow-hammer, the linnet, and often the hedge-sparrow, is occupied by the cuckoo for this business. *But here is another bird. What is this?* It is called the wryneck; and what do you think of its plumage? *O! I think it is very beautiful; I am quite delighted with it.* Yet the feathers are not glaring, but are penciled in a most exquisite manner, that carries with it an air of elegant simplicity. Open its bill, and observe its tongue; it is a very remarkable part of this little bird; it is formed long and round, and is capable of being thrust out and drawn in at pleasure. It frequents

ant's

ant's hills, and thrusts its sharp tongue into them, and thus catches its food! Observe its little short legs, and sharp claws, given it by nature, to climb the branches of trees with greater ease and facility. It runs along the tender shoots, and lives a very solitary life, being seldom seen in company with other birds. We have now cursorily gone over this numerous tribe of birds, of various size and colour: we have not seen two alike, though some approach very near to others. We may observe that nature acts in a regular gradation, and seems to unite every species, by an almoſt imperceptible line. In the tribe of birds that we have juſt examined, we may see this order attended to, from the raven to the little wryneck. What a wide difference appears at firſt sight between these two! Yet upon a minute inquiry we find some distant affinity, that ranks them in the

same class. This is an invariable rule in every part of nature, and if we scrutinize ever so much between the different classes of beings, we shall more and more discover the greatest harmony and order to exist. But let us proceed to open another case. *Ah! what a charming sight! What pretty feathers: surely we have never seen one of these before,* I thought I should surprise you with a new sight: this is a beautiful tribe of birds; their character and their manners are singular; and perhaps we shall not see the hand of Providence more visible in forming every creature agreeably to its way of life, than in the race of woodpeckers. *Are these woodpeckers?* Yes, undoubtedly; you may readily see that by the label which is fastened to each; but what I was going to remark is the extraordinary manner in which they procure their food: they live chiefly upon

upon insects, and as these little creatures are often concealed under the bark of trees, their bill is admirably formed for procuring them. Only feel this bill, remark its thickness, and observe how it is formed like a wedge, the better to pierce the bark. How admirable is this! what wisdom does it shew in the economy of nature! I see you are anxious to be viewing them more minutely. The first of the row is the green woodpecker. *What a fine head! It is all over crimson.* And do you not observe that circle round its eyes? *O yes, I was looking at it; and there is another circle within it, tinctured with red.* Mark also its wings, how nicely they are decked with green.—And here next to it is the spotted woodpecker, more glaring, but not more handsome. *What large spots!* The large spot of white that covers its eyes, with several others on its back, all conspire to render

its variegated plumage more striking. *Here is its bill also, formed like the others.* And is likewise admirably formed for the purpose which the bird uses it for. *What long sharp claws!* They are to assist it in running up and down the branches of trees, which it does with the greatest ease, and is with difficulty seen, as it hides itself behind a bough, as if to avoid being discovered—It builds its nest in hollow trees, but uses neither straw, feathers, nor any kind of lining. The woodpeckers of Brasil and Guinea form their nests, with great art, at the extremity of trees, where they remain, as it were, suspended in the air. This is to prevent the monkies and serpents from running away with their eggs and young. What admirable instinct do these birds shew, in procuring their food, and in building their little mansions! Here is another less spotted. *But it*

has

has a nice crimson head. The colours are not so vivid; it is however a handsome bird, like the whole race of the woodpeckers. *Ah! here is another, it is a little one.* Read the label. *It is the lesser spotted woodpecker; it is not so handsome as the others.* But there is some variation in its plumage; and, upon a closer examination, you will find that it wants the red feathers under its tail, as well as the large patches on the shoulder. You are now going to the next. Do you know it? It is a native of this country. *It is a curious bird, I am going to read its name*; (reads the nuthatch.) There are many peculiarities relating to it, which make it a very remarkable bird. It is very dexterous in cracking nuts, which it does by giving the nut some violent blows with its bill. It puts the nut in a crack, so as to fasten it, and placing itself a little above, strikes

it

it with all its force, breaks the shell, and catches up the kernel. *How astonishing! and done by this little bird!* It is an undoubted fact; and what is perhaps equally remarkable, the same bird, by inserting its bill into the crack of a nut, can utter a loud sound or noise, as if the wood were splitting, which can be heard at a considerable distance. *But how does it know there is a kernel in the nut?* This I cannot inform you; we must refer to that instinct which Providence has been pleased to implant in every animal, in order to direct it in every thing needful to its existence. This is an unerring principle, that leads and directs the animal in every motion that its nature requires; it points out what is its proper food, and causes it to shun that which is hurtful to it, or that would destroy its life. This is much above our comprehension; but we know enough

enough concerning it to excite our admiration, and to point out to us the hand of the Creator in all his works.

Let us now proceed to the next: I observe your attention taken that way. *Indeed it is a strange bird; but it is very handsome.* So much beauty cannot fail to interest you. *What long feathers are those that seem to fall upon its neck?* They form a very beautiful crest, but which the bird seldom erects, but when surprised or irritated. Feel what soft feathers plume its neck; and, above all, mark its wings and back. *And its handsome tail. I was admiring both: but let me read its name:—the hoopoe, what a comical name!* Look at its bill; you may perhaps think it too long: but it is admirably adapted to the manner of its procuring food, which chiefly consists of insects of the beetle tribe. It is said to be a solitary bird, two of them being seldom

seldom seen together: and even in Egypt, where they most abound, they are only met with in small flocks. *But here is another of these beautiful birds.* This is the creeper; and you see it is the last of this tribe. I observed you were eager to be looking at it. *Ah, what a little bird!* It is small, but a very handsome bird: I need not point out to you the various spots which are spread over its plumage. *But what hooked claws!* The hind one is curiously formed; it is quite a curve. This is to assist it in running along the branches, and holding faster to them. But we have now hastily run over the tribe of the woodpeckers; birds remarkable for the singular formation of their several parts, the gayness of their plumage, and their solitary way of life; a disposition marked with sullenness, that carries with it a very different air from that gaiety and sprightliness which

which seem so peculiar to the feathered race. The method of acquiring their food dooms them to incessant toil, hardly allowing them an interval of sound repose. It rarely joins in the sports of the other inhabitants of the air; and its wild cries and saddening notes, serve only to disturb the repose of the forest. But no doubt it enjoys pleasures which we know not of, and has felicities that render its life dear to it.

Let us proceed to open another case: here we shall meet with an extensive tribe of birds. *I see them: what nice birds! they are all small ones; and what a long row of them!* I knew you would be charmed with the contents of this case. This is a numerous tribe. They are mostly those little birds that are every where so common in our fields, and are seen hopping from spray to spray all day long. Many of them frequent towns and

cities

cities, and are familiar about our houses. Every country of the known world abounds with them, from the equator to the poles. They are known by their active dispositions, their beautiful plumage, and their delightful melody.—But, pursuing our usual plan, let us view them separately. *What a comical bill this bird has!* You have not seen its name. *I was just going to read it: it is the crossbill.* It is so called from the peculiarity of its bill, that is so curiously formed, and for which it is difficult to discover the reason or use of it, since there are other species of this tribe, that feed upon the same hard substances, that have not their bill so constructed. But let us remember that nature, in all her operations, acts by various means, which, though not always clear to our limitted understandings, yet rest assured that the good of all her creatures is the great

end

end to which they are all directed. This bird is principally an inhabitant of the colder regions, as Sweden, Poland, and the wilds of Russia, as well as the Alps and the Pyrenees. *But here is another, with a very clumsy bill.* It is very useful in breaking the shells of those fruits that are its principal food. It takes the cone, which encloses the kernel, into its claw, and with its bill makes a hole in it in a very dexterous manner. Unlike the last, it is chiefly an inhabitant of the temperate climates, and is seldom seen farther north than Sweden.—Look now at the pine grossbeak. *O! what a fine breast and head.* You see it is rather larger than the others. It has the hooked bill, which shews its near affinity to the last. *It has a forked tail.* It will be found so by stretching out the feathers; but observe its wings, which are black, edged with brown. Its

habits differ but little from the others. It frequents the loftiest pines, where it builds its nest, and fastens it on the branches with the resinous juice that issues from the tree. Another instance of remarkable instinct in birds! This next is a very common bird, and is called the green grossbeak; the reason of which you must immediately discover. *Yes, I see its plumage is every where marked with green.* Except some few spots of white. *It is very different from the others.* It is so, not only in the colour of its feathers, but in its habits and manner of life. This is very common, and may be seen in almost every hedge; whereas the other species are rarely met with in our country. But I see there is another that attracts your notice. *It is the bullfinch; I knew it at first sight: we have often kept one in a cage, and fed it with seeds: this is just like one that William had lately.*

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Do you not think it is a handsome bird? *O yes, but I thought it would be a pity to handle it much.* Be only careful not to ruffle its feathers, and you may view it attentively, and discover every beauty. *How nicely clothed about its neck, and what a fine black head!* It is indeed very charming to the eye; and is moreover of a familiar disposition, and may be taught to sing. *O yes, ours could sing very nicely.* We have now seen the last in this partition; we will postpone our entertainment till another visit, which I hope will not be long first.

FIFTH VISIT.

WE are again prepared to resume our examination of birds. I dare say you know which is the next case; you see they are all numbered. *I will draw up the curtain presently. And here is a strange bird for the first.* Not at all, it is the bunting; a bird common in every part of this country. It is frequently seen on the highest branch of a tree, or the uppermost part of a hedge. You see it is not very attractive to the eye; but there is one peculiarity worthy of notice; that is its bill. *I was looking at it, and just going to touch it: it is curiously formed.* It is very well suited to breaking the hard seeds which supply it with food. What at first may

may appear a deformity, will, in general, be found to agree with that harmony which is so conspicuous throughout every part of creative existence. *And here is another: is it also a bunting?* Yes; let not the different colour of its feathers mislead you with respect to what class it belongs. You may see that its hue is much like that of the last. *Here is its name, it is called the yellow bunting?* It is a pretty bird, and variously decked; but yellow is its chief colour. This is a common bird, seen hopping about in every hedge, and taking short flights before the traveller as he passes along; and yet, Charles, you did not know it! But let us go to the next, which is more conspicuously marked. *Let me read the label; it is the black-headed bunting.* Nothing more distinguishes it than the black patches on its head and breast; the other parts of its plumage much resemble those

that we have already seen. *How thick and strong its bill is!* You may feel it. It lives among reeds, the seeds of which are its chief food. They seldom perch, but mostly run along the ground. *But here is a white bird; what do they call it?* You will find by the label that it is the snow bunting. *Ah! the snow bunting, because it is white.* Its name is descriptive of its colour. *It is the only white bird that we have seen.* No, you forget the white owl. *O yes, so I did.* But this is not entirely white; only observe the black on its back. *It is a foreign bird, is it not?* It has been found in England, but being a hardy bird, it more frequently visits the frozen regions. It is found in the hoary mountains of Spitzbergen, the Alps of Lapland, and in America, as far north as Hudson's Bay. The cold of the climates contributes much to their whiteness. *And do they change*

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their colour? Very evidently, for the farther north they are found, the whiter is their plumage. *But why has it such long claws?* To assist it in running, which it does very swiftly. It seldom perches, but runs along the ground. Who can repress his admiration at every part of the lowest creature being so wonderfully adapted to the situation and mode of living which falls to the lot of the animal. Innumerable are the instances of providential care in every thing that exists, did we but more attentively examine them. But to proceed to the examination of the last in this partition:—read the name. *The tawny bunting it is called.* It is similar to the last. *But it is not the same colour.* That may be; colour is hardly a sufficient rule in distinguishing the different species of this tribe of birds; they so vary with the different climates they inhabit, and assume such changeable

able dresses. Thousands of them have been seen in the isles of Ferro, Shetland, and the Orkneys, where two of them have never been seen exactly alike in the colour of their plumage. *Strange! what a nice sight such a flock of birds would be!* Other animals change the colour of their dress the better to accommodate themselves to the changes of the year, or the climate, which they inhabit only for a season: so admirably is the nature of animals fitted for their wants and necessities!

A different tribe of birds is now to occupy our attention. Let us go to the other side. *What a race of small birds! they look charmingly; what are they all?* It is the lively tribe of finches; birds as remarkable for their numbers as the variety of beautiful plumage which they exhibit, and the sweetness of their note. *Ah! here is the sparrow.* A very

very mean bird you may think it, but we shall find it worthy of notice. It has no glaring feathers to strike the eye, but how can we deny it our attention, when it discovers so sociable a disposition? In the winter it does not forsake us, but, pinched with hunger, it is driven to take shelter near our houses, and is more bold than usual in picking up its food close to our doors. It builds its nest under our roof, as if it solely depended upon us for protection and safety. Such is the disposition of the sparrow that we are now examining, and which some persecute violently for committing ravages in the corn field. But if these birds do much harm, they probably do more good. Man, whose industry enables him to possess a larger share of the bounteous table of nature, should not grudge others a share, but suffer them to partake with him.—Your attention I see

is attracted by the next. *I was only going to see what it is called. And this a sparrow?* You see it is called the mountain sparrow. *It is white.* Many parts of it are; and its wings you see are handsomely variegated. *I did not think it was a sparrow.* You will be soon convinced that it belongs to that species of birds, by remarking its short strong bill. It differs from the other in some of its habits; it makes its nest in trees, and is never known to build in houses. *What a pretty bird is this! Look at its fine breast.* I thought the chaffinch would have more attractions than the sparrow, and I find I was not mistaken. This little bird is well known, and you have often seen them in fields and gardens. They often assemble in flocks, and sometimes engage in little combats; indeed their quarrelsome disposition is the only unamiable quality they possess. *Ah! but*

here

here is another still more beautiful. At first view it may appear so, but examine it more closely. It is called the mountain finch. Incredible numbers of them are said to arrive at certain seasons, from the northern countries. Hundreds of them have been killed for several nights successively in those parts where they are caught for food! Look now at the goldfinch. *O! it is a nice bird; I have seen them kept in cages to sing.* This is certainly the handsomest of the finch tribe, and ranks high for its beauty among all the birds of the grove. Beauty of plumage, and melody of song unite in this charming little bird, which, were it rare, would be more highly valued. But alas! they pay dearly for the sweetness of their voice; a perpetual confinement is their doom. Shut up in an iron cage they pass their day without enjoying liberty, which seems so natural to them,

them, and of which it is almost inconsistent with humanity to deprive them. They build chiefly in orchards, and make a very ingenious nest, composed chiefly of moss and dried grass. They feed their young with insects, though the old ones live upon seeds. Another instance of wonderful instinct! Because hard seeds are not adapted to the tender bills of their young, they supply them with softer food, that more easily digests, and requires least trouble to prepare for the stomach.—I perceive you are impatient to be proceeding. *I wanted to look at the next*; *I thought it was a foreign bird.* Read its name. *The siskin! it is certainly a stranger.* It is not often seen in our country, but may be found in various parts of Europe, and in Germany, near the banks of the Danube. I have heard that they are seen in large flocks. *Does it sing?* Yes, it has a noisy

noisy note, and is said to rival the canary. But, what is very remarkable, it will imitate the notes of other birds, even the chirping of the sparrow! We must not pass by the colouring of its plumage; observe its black crown. *I was admiring its feathers: how beautifully the wings are streaked!* They are indeed very striking. *Here is a yellow bird! Is it the canary that sings so loudly? It is the very bird!* You see I have called it the canary finch. *O it is a nice bird! Our poor little canary at home died last winter; it was just like this.* There are many varieties of this bird; and those that we have in our country are very different from those found in a state of nature. It is originally a native of the Canary Islands, a country remarkable for the beauty of its landscapes and the harmony of its groves. *And for nice birds!* Yes, if we may judge from the canary. The

breeding of these birds affords a variety of pleasing scenes, highly gratifying to the innocent mind. In Germany, large buildings are appropriated entirely to this purpose, and rendered commodious in every respect. *I did not think canary birds were so common.* They are brought to this country in great quantities, and are sold for five shillings a-piece. *No more! and brought so far. I will also buy a canary.* It is, to be sure, a general favourite, and for its song ranks next to the nightingale. It is surprising that so small a bird should sing so loud: it stretches its little throat, and strives at the loudest note. Next comes the linnet. *I have often seen it in the fields and hedges.* But if you have never seen it in a cage, you are probably ignorant of its song, which it often chaunts in a beautiful manner; nay, it will adopt the notes

notes of other birds, when confined with them in the same cage, and so often neglects its own natural note, to imitate the voice of others much less agreeable. But a more striking bird attracts your view. *I was admiring that bird with a rose-coloured breast.* It is the greater redpole; and see here close by it is the less redpole. *What fine spots on its head!* But they are not so vivid on the less as the greater, neither is the breast of one so lovely tinged as the other. They are very common birds amongst us at particular seasons, while at others they quite forsake us, and seek more southern countries. The migration of birds is a wonderful instinct, which guides and directs them from one country to another, over great seas. How surprising that they should know where to go to! *I wonder they are not often lost.* They are sometimes much wearied after a

long flight, and they have been known to fall upon the decks of ships that were traversing the ocean, and have been taken up by the sailors on board. *Poor birds, they were tired.* But they are in general enabled to perform theſe journies with tolerable eaſe, for they regularly return at the stated seasons. In these migrations they are directed by the warmth of the climate towards which they steer; or finding food scarce in one country, they seek it in another. How surprising that they should be able to do it! If you, Charles, or your brother, were destitute of food, where would you go in search of it? And if the country you inhabited were too cold or too warm, how little able you would be to travel to another without assistance. Yet many of these little birds do so. The same

instinct

instinct which governs all their other actions operates here also.

This case is now done with; we will defer opening another till our next visit.

SIXTH VISIT.

THE birds that we are now going to see will present no striking colours. They are a species little famous for outward beauty; but are by no means deficient in other qualities equally interesting. But open the case and let us look at them. *They are all larks.* And what do you think of them. *They are not very gay.* It is true. *Which is the sky-lark? I have often heard it when at a great height above my head.* This that stands nearest to us. *Is this a crest.* A very small one: the feathers are rather thicker on the crown of its head. You see it has many spots interspersed among its feathers. *It is handsomer than I thought for; but how thin and slender!* It can with more ease mount into

into the air, and bear itself aloft. I have seen it mount with the greatest ease at a very swift rate. It ascends almost perpendicularly, and if an enemy approach, falls down like a stone. It commences its song early in the morning, and is the leader of the vocal choir. Before it rises all is silence, and the deadness of night has not yet totally disappeared. It hails the husbandman as he goes to his work, and casts a gleam of cheerfulness around the scene. It does not hide itself in the groves, nor spend its note in the silent forest, but rises from the open lawn, and resounds its animating song as far as the bounded horizon. I cannot give a better description of it than in the words of the poet.

——————" Up springs the lark,
" Shrill-voic'd and loud, the messenger of morn,
" Ere yet the shadows fly, he, mounted, sings
" Amid

"Amid the dawning clouds, and from their haunts
"Calls up the tuneful nations."

Let us now leave it, and proceed to the other species. Here are the field-lark and the wood-lark. The first, you see, differs in appearance but little from the sky-lark. Its habits however vary. Its principal haunts are woods. It is seen on the topmost branch of trees, whence it ascends into the higher regions, tuning its loud note, and then alighting again in the same spot, with the same merry tune. *But here is the wood-lark; it is much like the last.* It resembles it very much; indeed, the difference is so trifling, that they may be easily taken for the same bird. It often perches on trees, and sings so charmingly in the night season, that it has sometimes been taken for the nightingale. *What nice spots on its breast!* They are much plainer than those of the sky-lark.

But

But here are two more. Is this a lark too? Only observe its plumage, that is sufficient to point out its affinity to the lark. These are the grasshopper-lark, and the tit-lark. The former is the smallest of the lark kind. The colours on its back are rather different: they incline to a greenish cast, variegated and mixed with brown. *It is a nice delicate bird: I like its slender form.* It is elegantly made. *And what a slender bill. I wonder it does not sometimes break.* Remember it does not live upon hard food; it has no nuts to crack, no pine apples to bore. I have seen this little bird, perched upon a high branch, take its flight, and ascend rapidly for a few minutes, and then suddenly fall, and alight upon the same spot whence it arose, without once ceasing its note. *Wonderful little bird!* But now for the tit-lark; we are already come to the last of the larks. *Oh! I have*

I have had one in my hands. It has a nice spotted breast. But observe that delicate white mark over each eye. It has some other varieties in its colours, that a little distinguish it from the rest. Like the sky-lark it mounts into the air, and warbles forth its note in an exulting manner. But let us see what kind of birds come next. *I hope they will be pretty ones. I long to see them.* You seem tired of the larks. I will presently draw up the curtain, and unlock this little case.

What a delightful sight! Here is a whole tribe of wagtails. They are very attractive to the sight. I knew you would jump at seeing them. Here are three or four different sorts. Here is the pied wagtail, the grey wagtail, and the yellow wagtail. *They are all charming creatures.* Observe the wings of the first, how they are spotted with white;

white; and the side of its head is covered with a spot of the same colour. *But what a long tail!* Observe its slender legs, which enable it to run very swiftly, that it may catch its food the more readily. How wonderful is this! The insects that swarm in the air are its food; it is, therefore, made light, and endued with quick motions, the more easily to catch the insects! But let us look at the next. *This is more beautiful than the other. What a pretty throat!* It seems a perfect beauty: I am not surprised at your admiring it. Observe how nicely it is plumed on its neck and back. The feathers are of a greyish dark colour. *But I admire those yellow parts; how soft and fine!* Its habits and dispositions are like the former. But here is the third. *This is not so handsome.* No, the colours are not so neatly penciled; nor is it of so elegant a shape.

Let

Let us now take leave of them; but first take another peep. We should not overlook the admirable disposition of the various parts of this bird, so suitable to its mode of life. Their claws, and long slender legs, fit them for running along the ground with great quickness. Their light elegant form, suits their active dispositions. They are full of motion, skipping and hopping about in all directions. But how can they see those small insects, imperceptible to us, that skim about in the atmosphere? Yet these supply them with food: they catch them in their bills! How often should we discover these wonderful adjustments of providence, were we but more attentive to natural objects. Nothing is made in vain; every thing acts to some end; and the most inconsiderable object is comprehended in the great design of the Creator!

Here

Here is a small partition on the right, that contains only two birds; but draw up the curtain. *They are nice creatures. I would not have missed them for a great deal.* Read the label. This is the pied fly-catcher; and the other is the spotted fly-catcher. But let us examine the first. *What a delicate white throat!* And observe that spot of the same colour on its head, a little above the bill. *I see it, and its wings that are so finely tipped with white. Certainly it is a foreigner.* It is hardly a native of England. It delights in the tropical climates, where nature has been most lavish of its food. In those countries the whole atmosphere abounds with swarms of insects; and there the fly-catcher chiefly resorts. What wisdom appears in the ordering of Providence! Those insects would become extremely noxious, were they not destroyed by some means or other. They

swarm in such tribes as almost to darken the air at certain times. You are going to the next. *I do not admire it so much as the other.* I think it is not far off being as pretty. Though it has not the beauty spot on its head, it has the same lively coloured breast. It lives upon insects, and is also fond of cherries, whence it has been called the cherry-sucker. It makes a careless nest, partly composed of such strong fibres, that it appears surprising how so small an artificer could make use of such stubborn materials. But what is perhaps more remarkable, it will build its mansion close to the post of a door, where people are passing all day long; and it will return to the same place, year after year. You see the bill of the fly-catcher open, as if it were on the point of seizing its prey; which it often catches upon the wing. It will sometimes watch for them, and when discovered

discovered, it takes a sudden spring, darts its bill on it, and returns to its same position. We may at first, perhaps, revolt at the idea of one creature subsisting by sacrificing another, as something contrary to the tender feelings of humanity; but a little consideration will convince us of its propriety, in viewing the universal harmony in equally balancing every part of the natural system.

Now let us go to another case. Peep in here. *What a number of little birds. They are all strange birds.* Stop, I will open the partition. Now you have a full view. *Here are some that I know; but this first is unknown; this plain looking bird.* You may read the label. *What! the nightingale: is this the nightingale?* Certainly. *I expected to find it a pretty bird.* It is almost wholly destitute of beauty. Nature has equally distributed her gifts. To some she gives outward

beauty, that pleases and attracts the eye; to others she bestows the more valuable quality of charming our ears, and animating us with their song. This case presents us with a very interesting tribe of birds. Here you see the redbreast, the redstart, the fauvettes, the blackcap, and many others. They are all warblers, that, joined in vocal harmony, make our groves resound with their various notes. They contribute more than any other part of animated nature to enliven our abodes, and render our habitations cheerful and happy. The nightingale is placed at the head of this interesting tribe. The superiority of its note has obtained it an unrivalled pre-eminence over the other warblers. Her song is chiefly heard in the night season. She hides herself in the recesses of the forest, as if afraid to be seen. What an example of modest worth! This leader of the vernal chorus

chorus, says an ingenious author, begins with a low and timid voice, and prepares for the hymn to nature, by essaying his powers, and attuning its organs; by degrees the sound opens and swells, and then flows with smooth volubility. The soft breathings of love and joy are poured from his inmost soul, and every heart beats unison, and melts with delicious languor. But this continued richness might satiate the ear. The strains are at times relieved by pauses, which bestow dignity and elevation. Such may we describe the powers of the nightingale; a bird universally known almost from pole to pole. In the winter season, it leaves the countries of the north, and visits the distant regions of Asia, where the warmth of the climate better agrees with it. They are seen at times in India, Persia, and Japan, and many other parts between the tropics. But now to leave

this master of song. *Ah! I was wishing to go to the red-breast, it is such a nice innocent bird.* But you do not see a little bird that stands behind. It is called the Dartford warbler. *And is it a nice singer?* The powers of its voice are not contemptible; but it is a bird that we are very little acquainted with. Now for the robin. *I have often had one in my hand, we caught one in our chamber, Henry, last winter.* In all ages this bold innocent bird has sought the protection of man, and has universally found it. Its social qualities have been celebrated by the poets. It comes into our houses, driven by frost and snow, and demands shelter from the severity of the weather. It comes to pick up the crumbs around the house, jump about the window, and even advance within the threshold, when allured by food. By these endearing familiarities its

life

life has been held almost sacred, and it has found equal protection for itself and young. Let us look at the next. *O! this is a very pretty bird. What a nice red tail!* Observe that white spot on its head, and its black breast. I have seen several of them in the fields between April and September, when they generally forsake us. We are now come to the fauvettes. *What nice little birds; but here is one not very beautiful.* That is the winter fauvette, or hedge-warbler. The first are the fauvette, and the lesser fauvette. *These are pretty birds, particularly this little one.* They are all warblers, though not of much note. They will imitate the voices of other birds, but are not capable of much modulation. I was, however, much delighted with the song of the winter fauvette, one morning, as I was walking close to a hedge. The little bird popped up, and perching upon

upon a slender twig, poured forth its brisk and lively note, without being the least concerned at my near approach. *How pretty that must be!* But here is another fauvette: it is the red fauvette. *Ah! I was just looking at it. It looks a comical bird.* Observe its mottled head. It imitates the notes of the sparrow, the swallow, and the sky-lark, whence it has been called the mock-bird. *But look here, what a beautiful bird! Let me read its name—the black-cap.* It is a very handsome bird. Here you see a variety of gay plumage; but remark the top of its head, what a nice black adorns it. *I am quite delighted with this little bird.* It is also a noted songster, and pours forth its modulated note with wonderful grace and ease. But I see you are going to the next. It is the white-throat. *I was reading its name. What a nice delicate shape!* Its throat is very fine.

But

But it is not of much value for its musical qualities. *What little bird is this with a yellow throat?* It is called the yellow willow-wren. *It is a very lovely bird.* It is so; I admire it much. *But here is another of the same family.* That is the willow-wren; it has no yellow feathers on its throat. *But this next: it is a stranger.* That is also a wren; it is called the golden crested wren. *What a handsome head.* This is a very beautiful bird; and is much admired. It is dispersed throughout Europe, and is found also in Asia and America. It delights in the tallest trees, as elms, pines, and furs. *What a comical little bird is the next! It is spotted all over! How small!* This is the little wren that hops about the hedges in winter, and, with its innocent note, strives to enliven the dreary scene. *I wonder how it can live.* Providence has provided for all his creatures.

What

What is this wren compared to the smallest insects? Thousands of creatures, not discernible by our naked eyes, exist in almost every piece of matter, and yet they all regularly live and die! They come into the world, and enjoy their due proportion of existence. Who can contemplate this, and not admire the wisdom that created all. But let us not tediously prolong this visit. Here are a few more in this case. *What a pretty bird is this! It is like a wag-tail.* It is the white rump. And here are the white chat, and the stone chat. *O! what beautiful birds! I never saw one so pretty as the white chat.* It is most elegantly barred with black and white; but we have seen many very beautiful birds, some of them, perhaps, would compare with this. Observe the white mark on the neck of the stone chat. It is a milky white. *They are both very nice birds.* Take another

peep

peep at them. We must now shut up; there are two or three more cases yet to be examined; but it will not do to see them all at once. Endeavour to remember what you have seen this visit; and do not forget the descriptions that have been given.

SEVENTH

SEVENTH VISIT.

THIS is our seventh visit; and we have already examined several species of the different tribes of birds that have yet come under the eyes of the naturalist. There is a large case, you see, on the right, that has not yet been opened. Let us go to it. Draw up the curtain. *What delightful birds! I am glad to see so many of them.* I was going to tell you their names, but I see you are reading them. *This is a titmouse.* These are all of the same tribe on this row. Here are the great titmouse, the blue titmouse, and the cole titmouse. These little birds are of lively active dispositions, perpetually in motion, nimbly hopping from tree to tree. They are widely spread over various parts

of

of the world; and are found in Africa, as far south as the Cape of Good Hope. They abound also in China, Japan, and the farthest parts of India. The first is the largest. Observe the different colours of its plumage. Here are blue, black, green and white; all unite to decorate its feathers. *It is a very pretty bird. But here is the blue titmouse with white checks.* Ah! that takes your attention. Examine it well. Observe, its back is of a yellowish cast, while the crown of its head is of a delicate blue. *How it shines!* It is a little busy bird, and often seen in our orchards, pecking the tender bud. This is dreaded by the gardener, who is afraid lest it should destroy the promising fruit. But it is only in search of caterpillars, which do much injury to the young buds, and which, if not destroyed, would entirely frustrate the gardener's hopes. Here is

the cole titmouse. *O! what a beautiful little bird: Is it not less than the wren?* No, rather larger; but it makes a gayer appearance. *Yes, that handsome head! But here is another, no less beautiful.* That is the marsh titmouse, and not quite so small. They are a race of very charming birds: So pretty, so attractive. What beauty does their plumage present? What can be more pleasing to the eye, than a handsome bird? *O! nothing.* You do not observe the next? *Yes, I do: I was impatient to touch it.* Look at its long tail: With this it directs itself through the air with great swiftness. *How it is muffled up about its throat!* It is, indeed, well supplied with clothing. I wish I could shew you its little nest: a very curious little mansion it makes; so small, that you would not suppose that it could contain it: and it is lined with

with the softest down, which makes it a most comfortable retreat.

But here are no more titmice. No, the long-tailed one is the last. Take another look at them, before we close this partition. Active and lively, they are in motion all the day long: they know little or no rest. Their food is insects and caterpillars, which they mostly catch upon trees. Some of them build their nests with the greatest art, and fasten them to the end of small branches, that hang over water, and thus protect their eggs and young ones from the attacks of serpents and other enemies. We have noticed their little short bills. Observe their conical form, sharp pointed, and a little flattened at the sides. Open the bill of this that stands nearest: examine its little tongue. *I am sorry to leave these little birds.* I do not doubt it; I wish there were more of

them to entertain you: but, perhaps, we are going to see some others, that will offer some attractions. *Let us go then: We are eager to look at them.* I am going to draw up this curtain. *Now, we see them: they are swallows.* Here you see a whole tribe of them. Here are the house swallow, the martin, and the swift. But first observe this with a long tail. *It is like a fork.* That serves it for a rudder to steer itself by. *What a fine back and throat.* This purplish dye, which shines all over its body, has a very nice appearance. Its breast is black, while the under part of its belly is of a nice white. They build their nests in chimnies. *What a strange place!* Two of these house swallows built their nest on the frame of an old picture, in a chamber of a gentleman's house. The room was out of repair, and they came through a broken pane in the window! *What a pretty little bird is*

the

the next: This is the martin. Observe its white throat, and see how long these wings are; the tips cross one another: stretch them out. *What a length!* You know these birds are continually on the wing: they are almost perpetually flying about, and nature has furnished them with wings of extraordinary length, to enable them to do it. But look at these short legs: it seldom perches, or runs along the ground; they are, therefore, more convenient than long ones. But here is another. *What is this called? It looks like the last.* There is, indeed, a family air betwixt them. You see it is the sand martin. *It has a very little body.* It is the smallest of the swallow tribe. *Here is a curious bird, without a mouth!* Do not mistake: you may see its bill, only look narrowly. These wings are still larger than the swallows', and, of course, its flight is more rapid.

It is seldom seen in the day time, but mostly in the evening, about sun-set, to avoid the heat of mid-day. They leave us at certain seasons, and have been found at the Cape of Good Hope. They seldom alight upon the ground, whence they could not well rise, on account of the shortness of their feet. *But here is a strange bird; all spotted!* You see it yourself. It would be impossible to describe it. We have met with no bird so variously plumed. It is called the night jar. Like the owl, it is seldom seen in the day-time, not being able to bear the dazzling light of the sun. *What a wide mouth! It is almost frightful.* If it were larger, it might cause some apprehension from its terrific look, but it is too small to give any one cause of fear. *It does not belong to the swallows.* But observe its bill, and its long wings crossed at the tips; and you will readily dis-

cover

cover a close affinity. Its freckled plumage is widely different from the delicate swallow; but other characteristics more strongly mark out to which tribe it belongs. Examine it more closely: it is the last of the swallow kind. It is found both in Africa and India, and even in the desarts of Siberia. The swallow is a migrating bird, and leaves us yearly at the approach of cold weather. You must have remarked, that they quite forsake us in winter. They are too familiar not to be missed, when absent. They dart about in the air with wonderful dexterity: and you will be surprised, when informed, they are chasing insects. The swarms of insects that inhabit the air, would soon become noxious, if not destroyed. Providence, has, therefore, designed most of them for food to other creatures, so that they are not suffered to increase in such quantities as to be-

become disagreeable to us. The swallow's nest is likewise cause of admiration: the art of man cannot imitate it; yet these little birds build their houses in a very little time. They wet their breasts by skimming along the surface of some water, and then roll in the light dust, by which they make a kind of mortar, that they make their nests of. Let us now go to another. *What a set of handsome birds! But they are pigeons.* No matter, they are very elegant birds. Here is the wild pigeon, or stock-dove, the ring dove, and the turtle dove. Look at the first. *It is a nice bird.* The feathers on its neck are of a beauteous hue; they shine, and appear of a blue and greenish cast. This mostly resides in the woods, and leads a wild life. Not like the common pigeon, it avoids the haunts of men; and leads a far less social life than those numerous pigeons which live with

us and enjoy our protection. *Here is a large one: what a nice spot on its neck!* You may read its name. *The ring dove.* Observe its eye: What a nice ring encircles it. Its feathers are fine and soft, and many of them handsome. It is very common, and is found in most parts of Europe. *But is this the turtle dove? What a lovely creature!* This is the turtle dove, which you have often heard mentioned. It is the smallest of the pigeon tribe, but by far the most interesting. *What is that mark on its neck?* You see it is spotted. *I should like to keep a turtle dove.* That would be depriving it of liberty. The fidelity of the turtle is proverbial, and a pair put in a cage, if one dies, the other will not survive it. They fly in flocks, and come here in summer. They delight in open, mountainous, sandy countries. They build their nests in the midst of woods, and choose the

the most retired situations. Before we leave these elegant birds, let me observe, that a species of pigeon, called the carrier, has been often used to carry important messages from one place to another. The bird, with a letter under its wing, takes its flight, and presently arrives at the proper place, though the distance may be many miles! But such pigeons were brought up to it. Their employ was important. They were sent from governors in a besieged city, to generals that were coming to relieve it without; and they were sent from princes to their subjects, with the tidings of some fortunate event. But let us leave the pigeons to rest, and proceed to another case. *This is a large curtain.* Draw it up. *Ah, what a sight! They are all large birds.* Now you see large birds. *But this is the common cock.* Observe its majestic height, and attend well to the many-coloured

feathers

feathers that adorn it. *What a large tail.* You know it is common in our country; but it originally came from abroad, and is an inhabitant of China, India, and many of the tropical climates. *But what strange bird is this?* Oh, you are looking at the pheasant. It is a fine bird. Observe its long tail. *It is spotted all over.* This is indeed very beautiful, but there are many varieties of the pheasant, that are brought from the rich provinces of China, that exhibit an extraordinary brilliancy of colour. Sportsmen cruelly persecute this bird; and it is to be feared that this beautiful species of the feathered race, will be destroyed by those who pursue every species of what they term game, with an avaricious rapacity. *Look here is the turkey cock. We have often seen this.* You may now discover all its pretty feathers, and feel the wattles that hang under its throat. *But*

what

what is this next? That is the peacock. *Surely it is the most beautiful of birds. Let me touch its tail. What golden feathers!* Its matchless plumage, says Buffon, seems to combine all that delights the eye, in the soft and delicate tints of the finest flowers, all that dazzles it in the sparkling lustre of the gems, and all that astonishes it in the grand display of the rainbow. They are kept by the rich in a tame state, but are found wild in Asia and Africa. The largest, and the most beautiful, are seen on the banks of the Ganges, and in the luxuriant plains of India. You are attracted now by the pintado. *I was reading its name. I thought I knew it.* Very likely; it is generally called the guinea-hen. *I thought so: I have seen many of them.* What nice small spots cover its whole body. Observe its delicate slender neck. I have seen some with more white about it,

but

but this is the common colour. You know what a clamorous noise it makes. It is an African bird, but is now to be met with every where in Europe, the West Indies, and America. It is very delicate food. The ancients esteemed it a great dainty. *But this strange looking bird here with a black head? I am about to read its name :—the wood-grouse.* Look at its glossygreen breast; and that bright red mark around each eye. *It is more beautiful than I was aware of. These legs, how well they are covered.* And mark its strong claws, and its curious tail. We rarely or ever see it in our country. It delights in more northern regions, chiefly abounding in Russia and Sweden. Here follow the black, red, and white grouses. This last differs from the rest in colour. It inhabits countries still colder, and avoids the solar heats, to enjoy the biting frosts of the tops of mountains

for as the snow dissolves on the sides of the mountains, it regularly ascends till it gains the summit, where it scratches holes, and burrows in the snow. *But here are some without tails: how comical!* Compared to the pheasant and the peacock, they have hardly any worthy of notice. You mean the partridge, the quail, and the cornerake. They all keep pretty much upon the ground, and long tails would be inconvenient, especially in corn fields and in high grass. The partridge is persecuted as much as the pheasant, and sportsmen are licensed to destroy them. These birds become almost white in cold countries. Observe the quail, a bird inhabiting almost every part of the known world, equally abounding in Europe, Asia, and Africa. At particular seasons they leave one country and go to another. They are seen in large flocks, crossing the Mediterranean,

nean, from Italy to Africa; and, in their return, visiting the islands of the Archipelago. Next is the corncrake, similar in plumage to the two last. *But what is that large bird that is placed last?* It is the bustard. It is sometimes hunted with dogs, being very swift. Only observe its long legs; they are exactly fitted for its manner of life. It is too large to fly much, and nature has given it long legs of great strength, to make amends for the deficiency of flying. In all her operations we see the same unerring wisdom displayed. Birds that inhabit low marshy places, are provided with long legs, that they may walk in wet places, and yet keep their plumage dry and clean. On the contrary, those kinds of birds, as swallows and martins, that are almost perpetually on the wing, have short legs and little feet, with which they can fix themselves against a wall,

while they are building their nests. I am afraid we have already prolonged this visit too much, we will now retire. I am in hopes of having birds enough left to fill up another visit.

EIGHTH

EIGHTH VISIT.

I WILL draw up the curtain, and open this large case. *These are all long legged birds; let me read their names: The plovers.* And a little farther on is the peewit and dotterels. *Ah, those are nice birds; but this tall bird nearest us, with a spotted head.* That is the great plover: you see it is spotted or speckled all over its body; but those streaks render its head more conspicuous. You see it yourself. Observe these naked legs; you may be sure it is a running bird: and these webbed feet indicate that it is a water fowl. It will run almost as swift as a dog, and when pursued stops short and squats down, holding its head and body still. It is not often seen in the day time, though it is a good

flyer. In the evening it comes out in quest of food, and may then be heard at a great distance. Its cry is singular, resembling a hoarse kind of whistle, which may be expressed by the words *turlui, turlui. What a curious bird is this! it has something growing out behind its head.* You mean that tuft of long feathers issuing from its head. It is the peewit, often called the lapwing. It makes a loud and incessant cry, resembling what may be expressed by its name. *And does it speak?* No, the noise that it makes may only be imitated by pronouncing "*pee-wit,*" "*peewit.*" Look at those parts which are white, and observe its black breast. It runs along the ground very nimbly, and sports in the air in a frolicsome manner, assuming various attitudes and directions. But I see another attracts your notice. That is the golden plover. *I was just reading its name.*

name. Observe its plumage. *I admire it much; what fine yellow spots!* It is common in this country, and most of the northern parts of Europe. In America, from Hudson's Bay to Carolina, they are seen in great plenty, shifting from one place to another. Here stands the grey plover. Observe its nice orange eyes. *But here is a pretty bird; I am going to see what it is called: I believe the label is torn.* It is the dotterel. *What a funny head.* It is only varied with white: see the same a little below its breast. *And here is another still handsomer.* That is the ring dotterel. You see its black breast and white throat. It has a large open eye. *And there is a mark on each side of it.* You must have likewise remarked its naked legs. Like the plovers, being more usually employed in running than in flying, their long legs are very advantageous; and as their food lies entirely

tirely on the ground, so they are endowed with a good degree of swiftness. But as, in seeking their food, they are often obliged to change their station, so are they equally swift of wing, and traverse immense tracts of country without much fatigue. They mostly frequent the sea shores and marshy places, and so have their legs bare, as feathers would rather be prejudicial, and be liable to get wet. Providence has made every creature in the best possible manner for its situation in life. Birds that fish for their food, or have to search for insects in muddy places, have long legs and bills, the latter of which are so formed, that they can feel or distinguish their food.

Let us now open another. *What an enormous bird! it is the goose.* You seem afraid of it; go nearer and handle it: stroke its long neck. *This is a white one, all over white,*

They are sometimes grey and white, or entirely grey. *What large wings!* And these are quills that we write with. How we are indebted to the goose for this single article. *And here is the duck and a little duckling.* I have placed them here, as being a very handsome species. Observe its feathers; feel how soft, they are like velvet. You know the duck very well; but I am pleased to find you are delighted with this. I dare say you have never seen one of the kind before. And here you see is a hen. *Why I thought it had been a foreign bird; what beautiful spots.* You see it yourself; it would be needless to point out the varieties which its plumage presents. I never saw a more handsome hen. It was a particular favourite, or it would not have been placed here. *Ah, I had like to have missed the little one by its side.* That is a chick of the same

species.

species. You have seen the tender care of the hen in protecting her young. She is more amiable than the duck. The duck is careless of hers, and seldom calls them to food, but lets them run into the water to seek it for themselves. The goose and the hen, how angry are they when a stranger approaches their little ones. The gander hisses, the hen spreads out her wings, and flies at the intruder. Admire their nature in being so provident of their young. Providence has endowed them with this courage when they have a brood, in order that their young might be preserved. How admirable! since at other times the hen in particular is a timid helpless creature. But we are now come to a more remarkable fowl than any of the former. *What strange bird is it? what a noble figure! is it not a goose? Read the name. Oh! it is the swan. The swan!* Admire

mire its form, how majestic; and its neck, that cuts so beautiful an appearance. The ancients were generally of opinion that this great bird had a charming note; if so, it would be a surprising bird indeed. But the swan in our days possesses no musical powers, whatever it might have done formerly; though there is every reason to believe that the notion of its singing was quite a fable. You have never seen one of these birds upon the water: when swimming, they make the most noble appearance imaginable: there is something so grand and majestic in their slow sailing, that strikes the beholder with admiration. *But look here, what an enormous bird!* Do not fall back, you need not be afraid. Let us go to it; it is quite harmless This is the largest of birds. *O! it must be the ostrich.* It is so. *It has no wings.* They can be hardly called wings. But you do not

suppose

suppose that such a gigantic bird ever flies. How could such a weight be supported in the air? What large wings would be necessary to enable it to raise itself off the ground. No, the ostrich does not fly. It runs, and that very swiftly. These short wings render him great assistance in avoiding his pursuers. Larger wings would be useless, and even cumbersome. *What strong legs!* They reach above Henry's head. Some nations of Africa hunt it for its food, which they esteem good eating. Their feathers are also very valuable, and some people deck themselves with them as ornaments. You can hardly reach to its bill. How very large and strong. It is said to swallow bits of iron and glass; but these are only to assist it in grinding its food in the stomach. Here is an ostrich's egg. *What a large egg!* The shell is very hard; and the inside is sufficient for several men to make a meal of.

The

The inhabitants of Dara and Libya breed up whole flocks of these birds and tame them. But their feathers are not all that is prized in the ostrich. They are ridden upon like horses, and will run with incredible swiftness. But let us leave this giant among birds, and examine the toucan. *What a figure!* You are surprised at its large bill. It is the most remarkable of the feathered creation. It has a very large head; this is to support his large bill. I will show you its tongue: observe what a length it is, and it is probable that the tongue is of more service in obtaining its provision. The toucan builds its nest in the hole of a tree, which has been scooped out for this purpose. It is remarkable for defending its young. It has not only birds, men, and serpents to guard against but a numerous tribe of monkeys, more prying, hungry, and voracious than all the rest.

If one of these latter come to take a peep in its nest, it presently meets with an unwelcome reception; and the toucan soon obliges him to sheer off. This bird is only found in South America, where it is esteemed for the delicacy of its flesh. The beauty of its plumage is equally esteemed, particularly the feathers on its breast, which you see are remarkably beautiful. These the Indians pluck off, and glue to their cheeks, and consider them as great ornaments. Let us go to the next, *What birds are these? these are the most curious birds that we have seen yet.* They are the huppoo, and the cockatoo. *What fine large tufts they carry on their heads.* They do so. Observe the long bill of the huppoo, and the short thick bill of the cockatoo. *Ah! but what do we see here? I believe they are parrots.* You are right. *But those white birds!* They are also called *lories.* The

first is a common parrot; and you will seldom see a more engaging bird in point of plumage. It is an imitative creature, and can modulate its voice so as to pronounce words and phrases pretty distinctly. In this the parrots of Brasil are more expert than any others. These will sit and chatter with their keepers all day long. *And they can talk?* They can only pronounce such phrases as have been taught them with great care and labour. In Asia and Africa, these birds abound in great abundance and variety; some are green, and can perfectly hide themselves among the leaves: others are clothed with feathers of the most beautiful colours. You see these little lories. *O! yes they are nice birds: I could look at them for ever.* They are met with in the burning regions of Ethiopia. In the East Indies, the parrots are of the largest size; in South America, they are

tractable, and very talkative; and in all the isles of the Pacific Ocean they swarm in great variety and abundance, and add to the splendour of those woods which nature has dressed in eternal green. When the Romans first discovered the Ethiopian parrot, they esteemed it a very great dainty; and their epicures were assiduous in obtaining them to dress out their sumptuous tables. But do you see this tall bird? *I have heard of the crane with very long legs; this must be it; and what a long bill!* It would be very inconvenient for this bird to be mounted as it were upon stilts, and not have a bill proportioned to the length of its legs. It could not search for its food. Nature is not imperfect in any of her operations. We have seen that all birds whose nature points out to them a watery life, are endued with long naked legs; so that there is a surprising difference between

between the leg of a crane, naked almost up to its body, and the falcon, booted down to its toes. You may observe particularly this bill. The points of it are nervous, that it may feel its food at the bottom of marshes where it cannot be seen. The crane delights in the cold Arctic regions. It comes down to the southern parts more as visitants than inhabitants. Close by, you see, is the stork; it is right before you. *Another long billed bird, but it is much smaller.* Nature has peopled the fields and woods with innumerable tribes of birds; she has left no part of her extensive domains uninhabited with the feathered race. We have aquatic birds in abundance. The bird before us is similar in its nature and habits to the crane. Its legs and bill clearly point out its way of life; and the places that compose its principal haunts. The stork was a particular favourite among

the ancients, and seems to be no less so among some of the moderns. The Egyptians worshipped the Ibis, a bird supposed to be similar to the stork. It is now hardly less protected by the Dutch, because it destroys the noxious vermin that damage their great banks, that are constructed to oppose the inundations of the sea. Look now at the American mock-bird. *What a plain little bird.* It does not vie with other birds for beauty of plumage: it is content with qualifications far more endearing, inhabiting a country where the feathered race are more distinguished by the gayness of their dress than their powers of music, this little bird stands conspicuous among the songsters. *And it is a mock-bird?* It not only imitates the notes of other birds, but the cries and howlings of the fiercest animals. It seems to sport with its mimicking powers. It will

sometimes

sometimes assemble the small birds together, by imitating their own cries, and when they come near, terrify them with the screams of the eagle. *Strange! and that done by this little bird?* Yes, but its note does not consist only in mimicking others, its natural voice is musical and solemn. It frequents the houses of the American planters, sits all night on the chimney top, and pours forth its sweet and various notes. The deficiency of songsters in that part of the world would seem to be made up by this bird alone. *Ah! but what are we turning our eyes to now? they look like water fowls.* These are gulls. They inhabit the most inaccessible parts of rocks; and there hundreds of them may be heard screaming with discordant note. You have not seen the roaring of the sea when its waves dash violently against the rocks. But add to this the piercing note of the gull, the scream

scream of the heron, and the hoarse croaking of the cormorant, and you have a scene the most solemn in nature for grandeur and sublimity. These birds serve the poor inhabitants of northern countries for food. They climb up the most frightful rocks, where these birds chiefly reside, and being provided with a net, they cast it over the fowl, and entangle them. These fowlers will hide themselves in holes of the rocks for several days together, watching for the gulls. But what an awful sight it must be to behold these gull-catchers sitting on the pointed rocks that overhang the sea. If they should unfortunately miss their hold, they are lost in the deeps below, or are dashed to pieces by the first rock that upholds them. Let us leave these gulls. Turn your eyes this way. Observe this extraordinary bird. It is the pelican. *What a large bag under its mouth.*

That

That is called a pouch. It serves it as a receptacle to put its food in to convey it to its young. It lives principally upon fish, which it catches with wonderful dexterity, though a clumsy bird. It hovers over the sea, and as soon as its prey appears near the surface, it darts down with unerring aim, seizes the fish, places it in its pouch, and then rises to watch for more. When its bag is full, it flies on shore to feed its young or devour the fish itself. You see it with your own eyes. It is an awkward figure; but this pouch that hangs so loose, is extended to an enormous width when filled with fish. How wonderfully has nature provided for the existence of some animals. The pelican is a perfect glutton, and seemingly little adapted to fly far in search of food: But without a large quantity it could not satisfy the cravings of its young; nature has therefore provided it with

with a receptacle in which it stores as much food as will last it from one journey to another. *What a large mouth and long bill!* Henry might put his head in its mouth; it looks narrow, but is capable of being greatly extended.

You see this is the last case; we have examined all the birds contained in it; we have therefore finished our visits. *But are there no more birds? must we so soon return? You have seen my collection of birds*; shells and fossils will add now but little to your amusement. *But I see a little closet in that corner with a glass door; and there is also a little curtain before it.* You have indeed discovered it; it was my intention not to notice it, but wait to see if any thing would escape you. You shall see what it contains. Let us go to it; take this little key and unlock it. Now draw up the curtain. *Oho! what is here?*

what

what a delightful sight! The most beautiful comes last. This exceeds every thing that you have yet seen of feathered beauty. *Is this a bird? what a little creature! We had like not to have seen it.* It is indeed a bird. It is called the humming bird. An European would hardly credit the existence of so small a bird, furnished with a bill, wings, and every other requisite, but they fly about like butterflies on the continent of America. They make a humming noise like a large bee; and skim over the flowery meads, sucking the nectar juice without resting. *O! how delightful it would be to catch them.* You could not well do it without hurting them. You see it yourselves. It is not much larger than a hazel nut; yet how beautiful are its feathers, that shine with green, and glossy red, that no velvet can imitate. Among quadrupeds the smallest animals are the most

noxious

noxious and ugly, but among birds the smallest are in general the most handsome. But I will no longer withhold from you a sight still more enchanting. This is the bird of paradise. *Is this a tail?* Yes. *What can be more delightful than such a sight!* You see it now before you; examine every part of it; discover every hidden beauty; you will be lost in admiration. Its neck is of a shining green, mixed with gold. Its head is no less beautiful; but description falls short, and words cannot paint the various colours that adorn this lovely bird. It is before you: satisfy your eyes with beholding a sight so enchanting. These birds inhabit the eastern countries, and are most plentiful in the Molucca Islands. There, in those delightful spicy countries, do these creatures abound so that the islands that produce the most costly spices are inhabited by the most beautiful

tiful birds. *O! that I could travel there!* You little know the toil, the trouble, or the danger that would attend a visit to those distant countries. We are under great obligations to those travellers that have saved us that trouble, and who have gratified our curiosity, without our enduring their hazards and dangers. You have been highly gratified with a sight of many European birds; many of them being not at all deficient in beauty of plumage or elegance of shape; and how many of them excel in the powers of song! while we find that hardly any of those eastern birds, that are so remarkable for brilliancy of enamel, have any pretensions to vocal harmony; they never charm with the liveliness of note, nor enchant with the melody of song. Nature has dispensed her gifts with wonderful judgment. Talents of various kinds are bestowed, but they are not all

united in one object. The nightingale boasts not of beauty, but yields to none the palm in point of vocal powers. Those birds, also, that make the groves resound with their various notes, are familiar with us, and incline to a social life; while those, whose voice would grate our ears, frequent the most uninhabited places, and live most remote from man. This is a mark of divine favour in the plans of Providence, who has thus even contributed t our pleasures, by peopling our fields and groves with tribes of inoffensive but charming creatures, that cheer and enliven the surrounding landscape, and not a little contribute towards that universal harmony, which the more we contemplate, the more it calls forth our admiration. It is now time to retire: take a last peep at these birds; I am going to lock the closet; let down the curtain. *And there is really no more to see?*

My

My collection contains no more. I see you leave it with regret; but if an opportunity should offer, I will, with Papa's leave, permit you to accompany me on a similar visit to a collection of different birds. *O! you are very good! But what is that ruffling among the trees? Stop Henry.* I heard the noise myself: You, Charles, walk down that path, and I will meet you by another way; and let Henry stand there upon the watch. *Here it is! here it is! I saw its wing behind that maple tree.* Advance towards it gently: but I see you are afraid; let me come; where did you see it. *There it flies!* It is dropped upon the ground. Keep back, and let me catch it. *Ah! you have caught it already. What is it? It is an owl. It is quite white.* Not entirely so; if you remember I showed you one of the same species at a former visit. *Do let me have it in my hand.* I mean you to keep it,

and carry it home. Henry must have a share in it; but do not forget to feed it. *Oh no, it shall never want meat.* When it is old enough you must let it have its liberty, for it will be cruel to deprive it of that enjoyment; for though it be a solitary bird, no way of life is so agreeable to it as that which it will be sure to follow, if not deprived of its liberty.

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